(b) if so, the action proposed by Government to remedy the situation?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) Government is receiving reports of closure and loss of jobs of export units especially in labour intensive sectors such as handicrafts, marine products, textiles, leather and leather products and plantations;

(b) To ensure that the job losses in these sectors are minimized, Government announced a set of measures aimed at providing relief to the exporters. These include reduction in the interest rate on pre shipment and post shipment credit, increase in drawback, and DEPB rates, a select set of services for refund/exemption of service taxes, interest on certain EEFC balances and increasing the list of products under Vishesh Krishi and Gram Udyog Yojna and also raising the revenue ceiling under the Scheme by Rs. 300 crores, aaccelerated reimbursement of terminal excise duty and central sales tax to exporters, provision of payment of interest for delays in re-imbursement of Terminal Excise Duty and Central Sales Tax. It is expected that these measures would, to some extent, neutralize the impact of rupee appreciation.

Status of Doha round of talks

1650. SHRI RAJEEV CHANDRASEKHAR : Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) the present status of the Doha round of talks on International Trade; and

(b) when and where the next round of talks are likely to be held?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) and (b) The World Trade Organisation (WTO) negotiations on Agriculture, Non Agricultural Market Access (NAMA), Services and other areas are being held in accordance with the mandate contained in the Doha Ministerial Declaration of 2001; the Framework Agreement of July, 2004; and the Hong Kong Ministerial Declaration of December, 2005. On 17 July 2007, the Chairmen of the WTO's Committee on Agriculture (Special Session) and the Negotiating Group on Market Access brought out Draft Modalities on Agriculture and NAMA respectively. Multilateral discussions on the two Draft Modalities texts are being held since September 2007. The current Round of talks are likely to continue for a further period of time.

Unfair treatment to crops like apple at WTO

1651. SHRIMATI VIPLOVE THAKUR: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have noted that crops like apple do not receive fair treatment during World Trade Organisation (WTO) negotiations;

(b) whether it is a fact that Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) between India and neighbouring countries is harming Indian apple farmers' interests;

(c) in what way will Government bring about equity and fairness in International trade policies to help farmers of Himachal Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir; and

(d) the steps proposed to reduce such aspects of FTAs which harm Indian farmers?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) The Hong Kong Ministerial Declaration of December, 2005 under the Doha Round negotiations of the World Trade Organisation (WTO), has recognized the right of developing country Members of self designate an appropriate number of tariff lines as Special Products (SPs) guided by indicators based on the criteria of food security, livelihood security and rural development. It would be the endeavour of the Government to ensure that the resultant negotiated modalities permit designation of products such as apples as Special Products with more flexible tariff reduction commitments as compared to other products.

(b) to (d) No Sir, the interest of Indian farmers are protected by keeping all items that are sensitive for tariff liberalization in the Exclusion or Negative List of a Free Trade Agreement (FTA). No tariff concessions are offered on these sensitive tariff lines with adequate care taken for protection of the domestic industry including that of farmers. Apples have been included in the Negative list of the South Asian Free Trade Agreement (SAFTA) and the India-Singapore Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA).

Import of foreign equipments for SEZs

1652. SHRI P.R. RAJAN: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Ministry plans to allow Special Economic Zones (SEZs) to import foreign made equipments to be used in the factories;

(b) whether employees from foreign lands will also be allowed to work in SEZs; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) to (c) Provisions exist in the Special Economic Zones Act, 2005 and SEZ Rules, 2006, for imports for carrying out authorized operations as admissible. There is no bar in the SEZ Act and Rules for employing foreigners subject to the existing domestic legislation governing visa regime for this purpose.

Increased demand for artifacts

1653. SHRIMATI JAYA BACHCHAN: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that there has been a sudden increase in demand by NRIs for Indian artifacts in foreign countries like USA; and

(b) if so, the details of export of artifacts in the last two years and so far, during the current financial year?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) and (b) The exports of works